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President: Mr. Essy (Côte d'Ivoire)

The meeting was called to order at 10.30 a.m.

Agenda item 154

United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s: draft resolution (A/49/L.44)

The President (interpretation from French): Members will recall that by decision 48/504 of 19 September 1994 the General Assembly decided to include the item entitled "United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s" in the agenda of the forty-ninth session so that the consultations envisaged in resolution 48/214 of 23 December 1993 could be held at an appropriate time during the forty-ninth session. By that resolution, intensive consultations were to be convened by the Assembly on the full range of issues related to the diversification of African economies.

I call first on the representative of Tunisia to make a statement, in the course of which he will introduce draft resolution A/49/L.44.

Mr. Abdellah (Tunisia) (interpretation from French): My delegation, speaking on behalf of the current Chairman of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), wishes to make some comments on the agenda item entitled "United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s".

I want to begin by welcoming the international community's interest in the development and growth of

Africa. The United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s has come to manifest concretely the Organization's commitment to the economic emancipation of the continent. The Agenda marks the renewed commitment of the United Nations to support Africa's own development efforts. For all African States, this is an act of faith and a sign of hope which, in spite of the precarious international situation and the difficulties of the moment, bolsters their struggle for development. This support is all the more notable because, in vast areas of our continent, the African economic and social crisis of the 1980s and the 1990s has yet to end. Combined with prolonged drought, this situation could only lead to social upheaval, damaging the precarious stability of countries, which in many cases had become extremely fragile.

That is the hostile context in which African countries have had to adopt policies to reverse the negative trend and bring order to their devastated economies. With that purpose, stabilization and structural-adjustment programmes sponsored by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank have been put in place by nearly all African countries. But in many cases the reform and structural-adjustment programmes engaged in by African countries have not yet yielded the expected results.

According to the report of the Secretary-General, since 1980 Africa has experienced continued stagnation, even in some cases decline; some countries that at the beginning of the decade were among the middle-income



group now belong to the group of least-developed countries.

The same can be said of the continent's external trade. Africa's share of world exports has continued to fall, from 4 per cent in the 1970s to 1.4 per cent in 1990. African countries have lost their share of international export markets to other regions, even with respect to raw materials, where the continent had enjoyed a comparative advantage for decades. The increased cost of imports and the decline in export income are major obstacles, preventing most African countries from equalizing their balance of payments.

At the same time, official development assistance has declined in real terms since 1990. Africa has also been passed over by the recent wave of private investment in developing countries.

Our countries know that economic cooperation and integration are the most reliable way to achieve balanced economic growth and sustainable development in Africa; during this decade we shall be working in that direction, both on the subregional level and continent-wide.

Regional groupings now cover all the subregions of the continent; this is an important development that could have a positive impact on prospects for development in general, and hence in the area of industrialization, the development of services and the growth of trade. The growing role of regional integration is reflected in the signing, on 3 June 1991, at Abuja, Nigeria, of the treaty establishing the African Economic Community. The broadening of the preferential trade zone for the States of eastern and southern Africa, the establishment of the Southern African Development Community and the consolidation of the Arab Maghreb Union should contribute, at the subregional level, to this trend. In southern Africa, more specifically, the integration of the Republic of South Africa as an important partner of the international community represents a hopeful potential, with new resources and promising prospects for growth in the region and its economic take-off and social well-being.

Africa's determination to go forward and to mobilize its energies in the work of integrated development was recently reaffirmed by the Heads of State of Africa, during their thirtieth summit, held in June 1994 in Tunis.

Speaking at the closure of that meeting, Mr. Zine El Abidine Ben Ali, the President of the Republic of Tunisia

and current Chairman of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), stated:

"Today it has become obvious in the light of the profound changes occurring in the contemporary world that the polarization of our efforts in the work of development is the only means by which we will be able to meet the new challenges of the coming century."

Thus, the thirtieth summit paid particular attention to the continent's development problems. It is significant that at this meeting all the Heads of State of Africa evidenced their interest in the implementation of the Abuja agreements, which led to the establishment of the African Economic Community. In this context, the African leaders stressed the need to undertake coordinated collective action to adapt the economies of their respective countries to the requirements of the new world market which will come into being with the World Trade Organization (WTO).

Calling for the rational, judicious and far-sighted exploitation of Africa's immense human and material potential, the Tunis summit called upon the international community to treat Africa as a partner.

However, we are bound to note that the partnership to which Africa aspires is slow in taking shape. In fact, direct foreign investment in Africa is very low and is not increasing. The investment flow has been only about \$2 billion for all of Africa in 1992, which is less than 2 per cent of all direct foreign investment in developing countries. The main interest of foreign investors in Africa is still its natural resources.

Africa is the only region in the world where the development of public investment exceeds private investment. To reverse this trend, many African countries have started a process of accelerated liberalization, hoping thereby to improve the effectiveness of their enterprises.

Dependence on raw materials, the low level of per capita income and the weakness, even absence, of inter-industrial links: these have, none the less, been negative elements acting as a brake on Africa's development and growth.

This explains the breadth of the problem and the complexity of the obstacles to be overcome by the continent in building the bases for its infrastructure, since

socio-economic development is obviously an integrated process and the result of vast, high-profile operations carried out in many sectors, including industry, agriculture, training and basic services.

The development and promotion of basic industries, which are essential for the sustainable development of the region and the promotion of small industries to create employment in the States of the region, as well as the promotion of industries that produce consumer goods, are also at the core of the action undertaken by the African States with the support of the international community and the United Nations system of organizations.

We must however recognize that the action now being taken both by the United Nations system and the international community in general is far from sufficient to solve the problems Africa is facing. To overcome the crisis that Africa is undergoing requires far more resolve and the dedication of far more resources, both at the national and the international levels.

Thus, we would like to express our concern at the decline in official development assistance. We believe that urgent measures should be taken to increase the flows of capital to African countries. These measures should go hand in hand with the reduction of the burden of the African countries' external debt. A greater mobilization of resources should thus enable the African countries to proceed from the stage of adjustment to that of development.

African countries should also be able to rely on international assistance in order to take full advantage of the opportunities opened up by the Uruguay Round trade talks and to reduce as far as possible the negative effects that may arise therefrom on a short-term basis.

Finally, it is the international community's duty to support the efforts being made by Africa to diversify its economy and thus enable its peoples to be no longer dependent on the export of one or two commodities, whose prices fluctuate at the will of the market.

In this respect, I should like to cite the following passage from the Declaration of the African Ministers of Foreign Affairs of 29 September 1994:

"We invite all the parties to the negotiation of the draft resolution establishing a diversification fund for Africa's commodities to demonstrate flexibility so that the resolution may be adopted in the course of

this forty-ninth session of the General Assembly." (A/49/479, para. 4).

The need to diversify the African commodity sector has been reaffirmed in all the Secretary-General's reports dealing with the question. Dependent on a small number of commodities for its income, Africa owes it to itself to diversify its production and its exports to permit the economies of the African States to absorb without great damage the impact of price fluctuations in exported goods and of the terms of trade.

It is in this context that we must consider the Secretary-General's proposal for the establishment of a diversification fund for Africa's commodities, including the agriculture and fisheries sectors. Such a fund would promote both horizontal and vertical diversification, and it could be managed by the most appropriate African institution, namely, the African Development Bank.

From this point of view, we appreciate the interest shown by our developed partners in the continent's well-being and prosperity. Relying on international solidarity, so that Africa may once again find the road to growth, we appeal to the international community to give effect to its statements of interest in and support for Africa's development efforts by contributing to the establishment of a diversification fund that could begin to operate in the coming months.

The draft resolution submitted on this subject (A/49/L.44) is directed to that end, and we invite participating States to reconstitute the diversification fund within the African Development Bank in order to create a window within the replenished Technical Assistance Fund with new and additional resources of \$50 to \$75 million over a period of two to three years to finance the preparatory phase of commodity diversification projects and programmes by African countries.

This draft resolution is now the subject of intensive informal consultations among all the parties concerned. It is our hope that our developed partners will show proof of the understanding and flexibility that are needed if progress is to be made in the negotiations on this text so that it can be adopted in the next few days, before the suspension of this General Assembly session.

Mr. Lamamra (Algeria) (*interpretation from French*): My statement, on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, on this important agenda item is an expression of the widest solidarity of our Group with the African

countries, which make up an essential part of its composition. Beyond this natural duty and this need for solidarity on behalf of the delegations of developing countries, my contribution to this debate concerns the commitments that the international community has made to the African continent, which continues to remain on the sidelines of progress.

Indeed, the designation of the question of the economic recovery and development of Africa as one of the five overall priorities spelt out by the United Nations medium-term plan and the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa took place in the wake of a decade — the 1980s — that was justly considered as lost in terms of development, for the African continent in particular. This failure was illustrated by the negative outcome of the implementation of the earlier United Nations Programme of Action for African Economic Recovery and Development. The New Agenda became, at that juncture, a new starting-point for international cooperation for the development of Africa, specifying in a clear and realistic way the responsibilities and respective undertakings of the African countries themselves and those of the international community, this within the framework of a world partnership to ensure the resumption of the economic growth and development of Africa, with a view to its full integration into the world economy.

Among the priority objectives of the New Agenda is the transformation of African economies through their integration and diversification, on the national and regional levels, in order to consolidate them and reduce their vulnerability to the external shocks resulting from the increasing globalization of international economic relations. Particular stress was thus placed on the implementation of a development process that would be autonomous and specific to Africa. An annual growth rate of 6 per cent until the year 2000, though only a rough goal, was considered one of the requirements for the sustained and lasting growth and equitable development of the African continent and for its effective struggle against poverty.

The United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa clearly defined the responsibilities of the African countries and the international community. The African countries were exhorted, on the economic level, to improve their economies through better management and a structural reform of their productive capacity in order to promote regional and subregional cooperation and economic integration. They were also urged to create a favourable climate for attracting direct investments — local and foreign — and to maximize the use of their human

resources, particularly in the fields of science and technology. Finally, on the political level, they were asked to continue the democratization of the development process to allow their populations to play a greater part in the management of their countries' public affairs.

The international community, for its part, undertook to support the efforts of the African countries to accelerate the growth of their economies and to ensure their development through actions taken on several levels.

First, on the financial level, support is to be given through a substantial increase in official development assistance, estimated by the Secretary-General of the United Nations at \$30 billion a year beginning in 1992, and also through the implementation of innovative and bold measures to solve the problem of the debt, the servicing of which weighs heavily on the budgets of all African countries.

Then, on the commercial level, the main developed partners of Africa have undertaken to support the efforts of the African countries to diversify their economies and to increase their export income. In that context, great urgency was attached to resolving the question of commodity goods through better remuneration and better access to markets. It was also recognized that additional resources should be available to sustain the programmes of diversification, both horizontal and vertical, in order to reduce the dependency of African economies on primary commodities.

Finally, the United Nations system itself was invited to make its contribution to the implementation of this Programme of Action. Its various bodies and specialized agencies were to establish, in their respective fields, programmes for Africa and to devote adequate resources for their implementation. Since the Economic Commission for Africa was called on to play a greater role in energizing and coordinating these programmes, a strengthening of its human and material resources was clearly in order.

All observers agree on the scope of the efforts made by the African countries to assume their responsibilities within the framework of the New Agenda. Most, if not all, of them have undertaken massive structural adjustment programmes and have embarked upon political reforms.

At the regional level, they have striven to promote regional economic cooperation and integration. The

Treaty establishing the African Economic Community, signed at Abuja in 1991, bears witness to the will of the African countries collectively to take in hand their own destiny through the use of their own capabilities.

This measure on the continental level expands upon the activities already undertaken at the subregional level, where existing integration mechanisms have been strengthened with a view to better coordinating and adapting them to the new objectives set before them as pillars of the pan-African economic community.

Praiseworthy as they may be, the individual and collective efforts of the African countries will not suffice to solve the continent's multidimensional crisis. Because of the scarce means at the disposal of these countries, it would be useless to expect significant results if the international community does not assume its responsibility to supply adequate financial resources and establish a favourable external environment.

Africa is a rich continent, but one that has not to date been sufficiently helped to achieve its potential. In addition to its human resources — young and industrious populations — Africa is replete with natural and energy resources. The judicious exploitation of these resources with a view to the economic recovery of the continent is hindered, however, by outside factors such as the external debt. The total amount of that debt — \$48 billion in 1978 — has been estimated at \$285 billion in 1993, or over 96 per cent of the gross national product of African countries. This handicap, alleviated only slightly by recent measures, should be noted by all of Africa's creditors, including the multilateral institutions, which account for about 25 per cent of all debts and drain 40 per cent of the total payments in the service of the African debt.

Africa, the part of the world that depends most upon outside financing for its development because of its minimal internal savings, has, paradoxically has been the only continent not to benefit from the recent increase in financial flows towards developing countries. These flows towards Africa were reduced by 14 per cent in 1991 and by 40 per cent in 1992. In addition, Africa still is not attracting private investors despite the efforts made to improve its economic climate and to offer foreign investors the most favourable legal and fiscal conditions.

This lack of enthusiasm in business circles, exacerbated by the reduction of public assistance for development, is further aggravated by rather pessimistic prospects linked to the entry into force of the Final Act of

the Uruguay Round. Indeed, all analyses and studies indicate that the African countries are among those that will be affected by the new multilateral business rules, whether in terms of the loss of tariff preferences or as net importers of foodstuffs. The resulting losses will combine with the penalties that African countries already suffer in the sphere of raw materials and terms of trade.

Our debates last year focused on the question of establishing a commodity diversification fund, as recommended by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and by the Secretary-General. So far, differences of approach have prevented a positive decision on this matter, but we hope for such an outcome during the current session. Clarification of the economic and financial bases, as well as of the technical implications, of such a decision having been provided, nothing except an absence of political will should further delay the establishment of this fund, which — need it be emphasized? — would be the first concrete realization of the United Nations New Agenda.

Albeit modest, this question is of symbolic importance in that it is an effective test of the chances of translating into reality undertakings contained in the Agenda.

In fact, as an excellent recent study by the Economic Commission for Africa abundantly demonstrates, the stake in the Agenda goes back to the fundamental question of knowing whether the international community is ready to treat Africa as a full-fledged partner in the world economy. Africa is a continent in the midst of several transitions. In the precarious conditions that mark its process of transition, external assistance has a decisive role to play. The helping hands extended to Africa today will be greatly rewarded tomorrow. An Africa irreversibly committed to the course of sustained development and growth and fully integrated into the world economy will open up great opportunities in the field of international trade and will bring increased prosperity, peace and stability to the world.

Mr. Runge (Germany): I have the honour of speaking in the name of the European Union, Austria, Finland and Sweden.

Although the item on the New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s has come up at a late stage in this session of the General Assembly, it is of primary importance in the field of economic and social

development. Africa is the poorest of the five continents. About two thirds of the least developed countries are located there. The rate of economic growth in the region, especially in sub-Saharan Africa, remains low. For more than a decade it has been insufficient to raise per capita gross domestic product. Wide areas of extreme poverty persist. Often the poorest and most vulnerable groups are not reached by our common efforts. Africa's integration into the world economy is weak. Its human and institutional resources have still to be developed to their full capacity. It is therefore right that the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s, which was adopted in 1991, should address the problems and needs of the region as a whole.

The European Union, as a neighbouring region with long-standing and intensive relations with Africa, has a special interest in that continent's economic, social and political welfare and in the implementation of the New Agenda. In this context, we should like to mention the encouraging cooperation between the European Union and the States members of the Southern African Development Community, as confirmed at the conference held in Berlin in September this year.

Despite the generally weak growth performance in Africa, we note with some hope that a considerable number of African countries registered relatively high growth rates in 1993 — in some cases, leading to an increase in per capita income. These countries tend to be the ones that implement structural adjustment programmes supported by the international community. Many African countries have embarked on processes of democratization and economic reform. Although standards of living have not improved everywhere, there are encouraging signs that African countries and their partners in development are on the way to having a more effective and lasting strategy.

Among the positive developments of the last year, we commend in particular the measures taken by the countries of the CFA-franc zone and the support that the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank are providing. A stable macroeconomic policy accompanied by structural improvements — in particular, with regard to the role of the market and the private sector — and an outward-oriented economy, together with the development of human resources and institutional capacity, produce positive results if these measures are resolutely pursued and implemented.

We also recognize increasingly that social aspects and the participation of the weakest strata should be integral

aspects of all reform and development efforts. In order to maximize the benefits of economic growth, therefore, we strongly support moves towards popular participation in decision-making and greater openness and accountability on the part of Governments. Not the least important fact is that more transparent government and a clearly understood legal framework improve the climate for investment and growth.

We are aware of the continuing difficulties that the poorest and most heavily indebted African countries are experiencing with regard to the servicing of their debt, and we therefore encourage the Paris Club to pursue its efforts to improve the terms applied to these countries and, where appropriate, to grant a reduction of their bilateral official debt sufficient to enable them to exit from the rescheduling process.

An important factor with regard to development in Africa is population growth, which continues to exceed economic growth. The important results of the Conference held recently in Cairo should be taken fully into account and should be integrated into all policies and cooperation efforts for development in Africa. The population and development provisions of the New Agenda for the Development of Africa already point in the right direction, which is the adoption of such an integrated approach. This should now be even more resolutely pursued on the basis of the consensus achieved in Cairo.

The international economic environment is an important factor for the development of the African economies. Africa's terms of trade have recently improved after a long period of decline, and we can expect such a development to have positive results for the growth prospects of African economies. This, however, will not diminish the need for many of these countries to diversify their exports. The successful conclusion of the Uruguay Round improves the opportunities in this area by enhancing growth in the world economy and by improving market access for manufactured products. The dynamic effects of increased trade are likely to be of major significance for Africa too.

Any negative effects of an erosion of preferences or of short-term price rises in the agricultural field should be largely offset by the new beneficial effects of increased trade. We recognize that African countries — particularly the least developed among them — need assistance if they are to benefit fully from the new opportunities. The European Union therefore supports the

implementation of the provisions in this regard agreed in Marrakesh, as well as the special and differential treatment provided for developing countries.

The traditional cooperation of the European Union with many African countries under the Lomé IV Convention includes the areas of trade and diversification. Considerable financial assistance is being disbursed under various chapters of the Convention for these purposes. Other international and regional institutions also devote substantial resources to the diversification of African economies and commodity development.

I would like to mention in particular the World Bank, which supports efforts to create the right environment for the private sector and also finances diversification projects or projects with strong diversification components. The second window of the Common Fund is another important mechanism to this end. It has continuously improved its operations. The European Union is prepared to cooperate to improve it further, and a number of projects designed to benefit African economies are under way. The draft resolution introduced by Ghana on the implementation of the New Agenda for the Development of Africa addresses particularly the issue of diversification. We welcome the idea contained in the draft resolution to use existing arrangements and to enhance the benefit African countries can derive from them. We are working with all other delegations to achieve consensus.

The European Union is the biggest donor to Africa and provides more than half of official development aid received by Africa. The Union remains strongly committed to maintaining its position as the major donor to African countries. We strongly support the international community's efforts to maintain, through bilateral and multilateral official financing, positive net resource flows to the poorest countries, including those in Africa. The focus of our official development aid is even more pronounced when the acceding countries are taken into account.

Turning now to the role and overall strategy of the United Nations system with regard to Africa, we support human development, the strengthening of institutional capacities and economic reform policies as central efforts of the United Nations system to support African development. An enhanced role for the private sector and the improvement of the regulatory and administrative environment for it should be a concern of high priority. We support every effort to improve the status and the role

of women. The reform of the public sector also remains an essential aim in many countries.

With regard to the social dimension of stabilization and structural adjustment, we encourage increased consultation and collaboration between the Bretton Woods institutions and the other organizations of the system. In the efforts to coordinate the assistance of the United Nations system, use should be made of the instruments and policies cited in General Assembly resolution 47/199, in particular the country strategy note and the resident coordinator system. These instruments should be widely used to establish an effectively coordinated development policy in accordance with the priorities and special needs of each country, including the need for adjustment and its social ramifications.

Let me conclude by reiterating our firm commitment to Africa's development as one of the world's most urgent priorities. With our concerted efforts and the right priorities we should be able to make African development and integration into the world economy a clear prospect.

Mr. Elaraby (Egypt) (*interpretation from Arabic*): At the outset, the delegation of Egypt wishes to declare that it is in full agreement with the statement made on this agenda item by the representative of Tunisia, the current Chairman of the Organization of African Unity, and with the statement of the representative of Algeria, the current Chairman of the Group of 77, on this agenda item to which we attach great importance as it relates to the present and future of Africa. The item is a carry over from the last session of the General Assembly, at which time the delegation of Egypt, then Chairman of the Organization of African Unity, negotiated on the subject. Our negotiations culminated in the adoption by the General Assembly of resolution 48/214, which paved the way for the achievement of more progress in this session.

We welcome the Secretary-General's two reports contained in documents A/48/335 and A/48/914, which we consider a positive step towards implementation of the recommendations contained in the "United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s". We especially welcome the two reports' proposals on establishing a diversification fund for Africa's commodities, within the framework of the African Development Bank, with initial financial resources ranging from \$50 million to \$75 million. We believe the proposed fund can assist Africa in diversifying its commodity structures in more effectively than the Common Fund for Commodities.

During the last session of the General Assembly the delegation of Egypt followed closely and attentively the development of the consultations on this important subject, and we have continued to do so in the current session. We are convinced that it is high time we moved from words to deeds in a manner that would make it possible to implement the Secretary-General's proposal now, during this session, particularly since the African Group has shown much more flexibility in its positions than it did last year. The delegation of Egypt is confident that this implementation could be achieved by focusing on the practical rather than on the formal. It is not important whether or not the proposed financing machinery should take the form of a fund, facility or window. The important thing is for the machinery to be set up within the framework of the African Development Bank. The delegation of Egypt also believes that this should be done within the seventh replenishment of the African Development Bank, which will cover the period from 1994 to 1996. However, this would require that financial resources which will be allocated to the diversification of African commodities should be made available from new, additional resources as in the absence of such resources, the allocation will be no more than a process of rechanneling of financial resources that would be transferred or deducted from the allocations to other areas of expenditure of which the African States are in dire need.

If it is deemed to be too late to finance the required facility within the framework of the seventh replenishment of the African Development Bank, and we do not believe it to be too late, then there is nothing to prevent us from taking the initiative of adopting a resolution to introduce a new window for the diversification of commodities within the framework of the African Development Bank which would be financed through the "special contribution" formulas, with the understanding that its financing over the coming periods will be from the African Development Bank's future replenishment, starting with eighth.

The world economy is moving out of a long drawn-out stagnation. The socio-economic situation seems to be improving in most regions of the world, except in Africa. It is regrettable indeed to note the continued aggravation of problems and crises in the African States, which languish under the heavy burden of external debts of \$285 billion. The servicing of these debts swallows up approximately 25 per cent of those African countries' export earnings, at a time when more than 20 million Africans are threatened by famine, AIDS, malaria and other endemic diseases.

It is for the sake of Africa, and in the hope of coming to grips with one of its most difficult problems, namely, the diversification of its export commodity and production structures, that we look forward to the speedy reappointment of a chairman to lead consultations on this important agenda item towards the adoption of a resolution on the issue that would ensure the realization of Africa's aspirations and ambitions and thereby given concrete form to the hoped-for relationship of partnership and cooperation between Africa and the donor States and institutions.

Mr. Ould Ely (Mauritania) (*interpretation from French*): I should like at the outset to associate my delegation with the views already expressed by the Ambassadors of Tunisia, who spoke on behalf of the current Chairman of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), and of Algeria, who spoke as Chairman of the Group of 77 and on behalf of China.

Mauritania, which has always worked to achieve African solidarity, is pleased to take part today in this debate which is important in every way to Africa.

The consideration of agenda item 154, "United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s", is taking place at a time when the African continent's economic and social crisis is growing more acute. It is taking place three years after the adoption of General Assembly resolution 46/151, of 18 December 1991, which provided for the establishment of this New Agenda, designed to fill in the gaps and correct the shortcomings of the United Nations Programme of Action for African Economic Recovery and Development 1986-1990, whose results had fallen far short of the expectations to which it had given rise.

The adoption of the New Agenda had at the time revealed the high priority the United Nations was giving to the question of African economic recovery and development. A certain number of measures or initiatives were taken to promote the implementation of the decisions adopted and to avoid the disappointing experience of the Programme of Action. The International Conference on African Development, held at Tokyo on 5 and 6 October 1993, was one of the efforts deployed in this context, to create awareness of the problem and promote the continent's development.

Three years after launching that new partnership agreement, we are forced to recognize that Africa's economic and social situation, far from having improved,

has continued to deteriorate in a climate marked by a net decline in export earnings and in the flow of investments and a corresponding increase in external debt. In 1992, for example, the real growth rate of the gross national product of African countries was only 1.5 per cent, in other words half the rate of population growth, whereas external debt had climbed to more than \$288 billion. Since the beginning of the decade of the 1990s, the total net flow of resources to Africa has steadily declined, and for the same year 1992 it was 22 per cent below the 1990 level.

Official development aid has also slowed. The average contribution by donor States, which has remained below the target of 0.7 per cent of gross national product recommended by the United Nations, has even fallen in recent years — from an average of 0.38 per cent in the 1980s to approximately 0.33 per cent today. This reduction in financial flows has occurred in spite of the consensus expressed by the African countries and the international community on the need to give priority to increasing the flow of external capital to Africa, and in spite of the commitments entered into by various parties.

In this already difficult context, the forthcoming entry into force of the new agreements on the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) leading to the establishment of the World Trade Organization could exacerbate the problems of the African countries even further. Indeed, every study undertaken so far has recognized that while world trade as a whole will benefit from the new agreements Africa, for its part, may well find itself a loser for some time to come. In fact, with the elimination of the main tariff reductions of the Lomé agreements or the generalized system of preferences, the tariff advantages African has enjoyed will disappear. This will be reflected in a lessening of the preferential margins of 28 per cent with regard to Europe, 40 per cent with regard to the United States and 15.7 per cent with regard to Japan. The elimination of agricultural subsidies will affect the price of food products, which will probably rise an average of 5 per cent and as high as 10 per cent for cereals. Natural resources like fish or mining products such as iron will probably, in this framework, lose their preferential margins of 60 per cent within the generalized system of preferences and 16 per cent within the Lomé Convention.

With a very limited production base, a constant decline in export earnings, a very large external debt and other financial constraints, such as the very low level of investments and the substantial reduction in development assistance, it will be difficult for Africa to achieve the

desired improvements in its current situation without the contribution of the international community. Indeed, to meet this very real need, the New Agenda advocated a minimum net amount of \$30 billion for official development assistance in 1992 and an average increase of 4 per cent per year thereafter.

African leaders, aware that they bear the primary responsibility for the development of their countries, have committed their States to vast structural, economic and political adjustment programmes designed to promote democracy and the transition to market economies. They are determined to promote human rights, effectiveness in their administrations, and the role of the private sector, while rationalizing public expenditure. The adoption on 3 June 1991 at the continental level of the Abuja Treaty, which created the African Economic Community, and the establishment of mechanisms to prevent, manage and settle conflicts in Africa stem from their determination fully to assume their responsibilities and to create an appropriate framework for sustainable development.

Indeed, without peace and stability it will be difficult to promote sustainable development, which is most likely to thrive within the context of large political and economic groupings. That is why Mauritania, in strengthening its cooperation with the Western African States in the context of the Economic Community of West African States, very willingly joined the other States of the Maghreb in creating the Arab Maghreb Union. This dual membership stems from our determination to participate in Africa's general development while advocating and encouraging Arab-African solidarity.

The outstanding efforts made by many African countries to face the many challenges involved in the continent's development will continue to be frustrated so long as the international community does not honour the commitments it undertook in the New Agenda. In this connection, we regret that since the adoption of resolution 48/214, of 23 December 1993, it has not been possible to relaunch negotiations for the creation of a diversification fund for Africa's commodities. With the forthcoming establishment of the World Trade Organization, it is all the more urgent to establish this fund. We therefore urge all our partners to seek the speediest possible solution to this question.

Today, Africa must not only diversify its products if it is to be integrated in the new competitive system that will emerge from the new GATT agreements, but also

promote, in cooperation with the developed countries, innovative and bold action in the framework of a global and sustainable solution to the debt crisis. That is why the proposal to hold an international conference on Africa's external debt should finally be favourably received. We believe that any hope of relaunching the African economies without a definitive solution to that heavy burden would be dashed. Hence, the General Assembly and its constituent nations must invest more of their authority in ensuring that these demands are met.

Before concluding, I wish to reaffirm my Government's support for the praiseworthy efforts of the Office of the Special Coordinator for Africa and the Least Developed Countries, which, although the means it requires have been slow in coming and insufficient, is striving to fulfil its mandate satisfactorily. We hope that the United Nations will finally accord concrete and speedy priority to Africa's recovery and development.

Mr. Wang (China) (*interpretation from Chinese*): Two years have elapsed since the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s was initiated. In these two years, the African countries have made tremendous efforts to implement the New Agenda, and yet there has been no significant improvement in their social and economic plight. Rather, the economic gap between them and other regions of the world is widening. They are plagued by three major problems: growing indebtedness, a decreasing inflow or even reverse flow of capital, and worsening terms of trade. Their total foreign debt has already exceeded \$300 billion. Their terms of trade are also deteriorating. Old trade barriers have yet to be removed, while new ones are emerging. All these factors have seriously hampered Africa's economic development.

The New Agenda is a commitment undertaken by the African countries themselves, but it has also won the support of all the other United Nations Members. In recent years, many African countries have carried out economic and social reforms for which they have paid dearly. Regrettably, their endeavours have not been matched by any strong support or cooperation from the international community. Many of the objectives set in the Agenda are far from being achieved.

It is very clear that global stability and sustained development will remain elusive until the gap between the rich and poor countries is narrowed. The recovery and development of the African economy bear not only on the long-term stability of the African countries but also on the

sustained and sound economic development of the world. True, Africa's development, in the final analysis, will depend on the efforts of the African countries and people themselves, but without a favourable external environment and adequate outside assistance many African countries will be unable to free themselves from their current predicament. We therefore hope that the international community will give due attention to Africa's difficulties and take them into serious consideration. We hope that at the same time, it will adopt a positive approach and take concrete measures to ensure the attainment of the objectives of the Agenda.

To this end, we propose that the international community make sincere efforts to remove trade barriers, provide new resources and transfer technology. The countries concerned should fulfil their commitment by creating favourable external conditions for the African countries that will steer them onto the track of healthy development.

The international community should support the process of economic cooperation of the African countries. We are pleased to note that the trend towards regional groupings among African countries continues to grow. The approval of the Abuja Treaty by two thirds of the African countries last May represents the formal start of Africa's economic integration. The admission of South Africa into the Southern African Development Community has greatly enhanced the aggregate economic weight of the organization. All this will contribute to the overall development of the African countries and should be welcomed and strongly supported by the international community.

The conclusion of the Uruguay round multilateral trade talks poses a huge challenge to Africa's development. As part of the developing countries, the African countries made their contribution to the success of the talks. We hope that the international community will in turn make efforts to alleviate the negative impact on them resulting from the talks.

The role of the United Nations in the process of Africa's development is not to be overlooked. We hope that the United Nations will formulate and carry out plans and projects in the light of Africa's actual situation and provide strong support for the African countries in cooperation between them and with other regions.

China enjoys traditional friendship with the African countries. The Chinese Government and people deeply

understands and very much sympathizes with their current plight. In spite of its own difficulties and problems, China has done what it can to assist the African countries. The Chinese Government is ready to work together with the African countries, cooperate with them in various forms and make its contribution to the attainment of the objectives in the Agenda.

Mrs. Junejo (Pakistan): The face of a young mother with an undernourished child, fleeing from hunger somewhere in Africa, appears on the cover of every journal and every television screen. It arouses a great deal of sympathy. But, unfortunately it has not been able to generate concerted international action to avert the mounting human tragedies in Africa.

According to the World Economic and Social Survey 1994 the economic prospects of Africa remain poor. A reversal of the trend of declining per capita output is not in sight even though considerable efforts have been made at economic reform and adjustment.

In addition to its economic difficulties, Africa has now become the region where political instability and violence are most widespread. The roots of this civil strife, in most cases, can be traced to the failure of development. Consolidation of peace and political stability throughout Africa is critical both on short-term humanitarian grounds; and it must be achieved to enhance the prospects for long-term economic development. Given the nature and the magnitude of the challenge, success will require a strong and abiding commitment by the international community.

In Africa, the pattern of slow growth persisted in 1993. Output grew by 1.7 per cent in 1993, an improvement over 1992 but still well below the growth rate of the population.

Except for the slight improvement in commodity prices, all other major economic indicators remain sombre. The savings rates in African countries continued to decline. While most African countries depended heavily on external financial resources, commitments of the African Development Fund, the concessional facility of the African Development Bank, fell by more than a third. Similarly, official development assistance to African countries was also greatly affected by the overall 10 per cent fall in concessional arrangements through multilateral organizations. Africa was virtually bypassed in the competition for foreign direct investment. The economic situation was further aggravated for the CFA countries since their de-linking from the French franc.

Africa's export earnings continue to stagnate. The continent lost 3.5 per cent in its terms of trade in 1993, which reduced the purchasing power of Africa's 1993 exports by over \$3 billion relative to 1992 prices. The African countries suffered a trade loss of \$10 billion in relation to 1989.

These statistics are aggravated by the protectionist tendencies in the developed countries. It is estimated that developing countries in general lose about \$100 billion a year in export revenues as a result of market barriers in developed countries, or almost twice the official development assistance that developed countries provide to developing countries. Africa has been severely hit by this pattern of trade. Since 1985, Africa's share of trade fell to under 2 per cent of world trade. Thus, the special arrangements made for many African and low-income countries have so far proved insufficient to respond to their goals of economic diversification, industrialization and export expansion.

The preliminary assessments of the impact of the Uruguay Round negotiations on the trade of most African countries are not very encouraging. In recognition of the expected extra burden on the African economies, especially of the least developed countries among them, the Uruguay Round package and the Marrakesh Declaration provide for special arrangements for Africa. It is hoped that, in the implementation of these provisions and the setting in place of the compensatory mechanisms envisaged therein, the international community and especially the developed countries will fulfil their responsibilities in trying to ensure that Africa is not the loser once again.

The debt burden remains onerous for most African countries. Despite cancellation, the official debt of some among them has increased. The \$305 billion owed by Africa — and even more, the \$152 billion owed by sub-Saharan Africa — are well beyond their debt-carrying capacity. Most of this debt is owed to multilateral financial institutions. Concerted efforts for cancellation of official debt, both bilateral and multilateral, owed by the poorest and the alleviation of the debt burden of the rest of the African countries, especially those in sub-Saharan Africa, are essential.

The Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme, Mr. Gustav Speth, speaking at the African American Institute, earlier this year, observed that history has not been fair to Africa. Two externally imposed experiences — the slave trade and colonialism —

interrupted the process of indigenous State formation and development of the several great empires of the region and introduced artificially imposed systems of administration and production. Africa has suffered as a result of these foreign impositions. The causes of civil strife rooted in underdevelopment need to be addressed.

Africa is becoming increasingly marginalized in the world economy. The New Agenda for the Development of Africa recognized that positive change and recovery in the African economic crisis required both national and international efforts. This was reaffirmed at the Tokyo International Conference on African Development. While stressing that Africa's development is the primary responsibility of Africans, the world community made a commitment to give full and tangible support to the efforts of African countries. It is clear that Africa cannot succeed in meeting the challenges it confronts unless it is provided with external financial assistance and strengthened international efforts are made to create a global economic climate conducive to African development efforts. The New Agenda set out the priority objectives of African countries, which are the accelerated transformation, integration and diversification of their economies to integrate them into the world economy, reduce their vulnerabilities to external shocks, increase their dynamism and enhance their self-reliance.

Africa's commitment to the New Agenda is reflected in the reform measures instituted in the effective economic management of exchange rates, public enterprises, population planning and the agricultural sector. These measures have been adopted despite high political, social and economic costs. The people of Africa have borne these painful sacrifices with great dignity. They rightly want the downward trend in the development and impoverishment of their people to come to an end. The expectation is that genuine international economic cooperation will lead to national revitalization and recovery.

The African countries have shown great seriousness in keeping its part of the bargain. Despite their earnest efforts to carry out strict structural adjustment policies to improve their economic performance, the majority of them have found little reprieve from the unfavourable external economic environment, harsh climatic conditions, civil war and strife.

The adverse effects of domestic and external resource constraints on African productivity have far outweighed the positive impact of policy reforms. On the other hand, the

international community has not been as forthcoming as was expected in fulfilling its part of the pact.

It was recognized during the discussions on the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s that the diversification of African economies could be a critical impetus to supplement the development efforts of African countries. Over the past three years, the question of a diversification fund for Africa has been discussed. These discussions have produced no results despite the great flexibility shown by the African delegations. It is time that the matter was resolved, taking into account the options presented by the African Group. It is also critical that our present negotiations in no way erode the commitments made in 1991.

We should not lose the initiative taken in 1991 to address the African crisis. The international community, and Africa in particular, cannot afford to see more Rwandas and Somalias. In a world blessed with abundant resources, more people cannot be allowed to join those living in abject poverty. Can the international community stand back and watch in silence as hunger, deprivation, pain and misery continue to ravage a proud people? Will we only respond to the photograph of a dying child on the cover of "Time" magazine? How many States are we willing to watch fail before we mobilize the collective political will to overcome the problems of economic stagnation and social disruption which lie at the root of the multiple crises confronting the great continent of Africa? The prescriptions have been provided in the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s and at the Tokyo International Conference on African Development. What we need is action by the world community.

Pakistan is a developing country. We confront the problems of development and many challenges. Despite all the difficulties, we have succeeded in maintaining a fairly encouraging rate of economic growth. We are interested in sharing our development experience with other developing countries, especially our brothers and sisters in Africa. In the spirit of promoting cooperation and solidarity with Africa, Pakistan has instituted a special programme which allows us to share our experiences with our friends in Africa. The Africa Programme, as it is called, which was launched in 1987 provides for scholarships through which African students and professionals receive training in Pakistan. Hundreds of young Africans train in Pakistan in various fields each year. Similarly, hundreds of Pakistani doctors, engineers

and other professionals participate in Africa's development process. The possibilities of technical cooperation under the Africa Programme are open to all our African brothers and sisters. We look forward to enlarging the Africa Programme to respond in a modest way to the challenges and needs of Africa — a continent which we are certain will win the battle for its economic and social development because of the courage and sacrifices of its people and, we hope, the solidarity of the world community.

Mr. Seydou (Niger) (*interpretation from French*): The failure to implement the United Nations Programme of Action for African Economic Recovery and Development lay behind our Assembly's adoption in 1991, in resolution 46/151, of the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s.

Today, we are again considering the implementation of this New Agenda. Following the statements made by the Permanent Representative of Tunisia on behalf of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and the Permanent Representative of Algeria on behalf of the Group of 77, and other representatives, I would like, on behalf of the delegation of Niger, to state the importance we attach to one of the recommendations of the New Agenda — the establishment of a diversification fund for Africa's commodities.

The report of the Secretary-General in document A/48/914, which we welcome, sets forth the reasons for the General Assembly's inability at its forty-eighth session to adopt the document containing the recommendation on the creation of that fund.

One of the main reasons was the need to ensure that the African Development Bank would be able to host and manage the diversification fund. Since the beginning of the forty-ninth session, there have been consultations and contacts on this matter; a letter dated 6 February 1994 was sent by the President of the African Development Bank to the Under-Secretary-General for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development; and a meeting was held on 9 December with one of the officials of the Bank. All this has convinced us that the Bank is in agreement to host and manage the diversification fund for Africa's commodities.

However, the African Development Bank has made one condition: initial resources must be deposited in the fund. These resources can be obtained in two ways: first, in the framework of negotiations on the replenishment of the Bank's resources, in which the donor countries could specify an amount for the initial resources to be put into

the diversification fund; or, secondly, the donor countries could make a special contribution to set up the fund.

The African countries were prepared to consider the first possibility — that is, to obtain the money for the diversification fund in the framework of the seventh replenishment of the African Development Bank's resources and the Technical Assistance Fund. Unfortunately, information from the Bank indicates that negotiations on the seventh replenishment are drawing to a close and that the \$2.7 billion provided to that end are already spoken for, with no mention by the donor countries as to allocations to the diversification fund for Africa's commodities.

Yet consultations with our partners since the beginning of this session have confirmed our feeling that they have adopted a new approach to the speedy establishment of the diversification fund.

With the end of negotiations on a seventh replenishment of the African Development Bank, the second possibility remains: special contributions, which are a normal practice in the Bank and which would apply because of the urgency of a number of matters. Thus, donor countries could make a special contribution to establish the initial resources of the diversification fund for African commodities, given the urgency we attach to the problem. Though we may be late in the normal process of the seventh replenishment of the African Development Bank, we are not late for the system of special contributions.

Thus, Niger feels that it is time for the donor community to show that Africa is truly among its concerns and priorities by taking concrete action in the form of special contributions to the African Development Fund. We appeal to the international community to respond as a matter of urgency so that these contributions can be made as soon as possible.

My delegation wishes also to remind the international community that in financial institutions such as the African Development Bank, the Common Fund for Commodities and the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) there is already activity relating to the diversification of commodities. But these are projects that have already reached the stage of securing financing.

The fund we earnestly seek would promote the diversification of the African commodity sector by

financing technically and economically viable diversification projects. It would enable African projects to reach the stage of gaining financing from financial institutions. It would precede activities of such bodies as the Common Fund and UNIDO, which relate to projects already at the financing stage. The diversification fund African countries wish to see would enable us to consider ideas for projects and, in cooperation with national diversification councils, to bring them to the financing stage.

This is a crucial moment for African commodities, since it is clear that the diversification of African economies is among the solutions to the overall problem of African economic recovery and development.

African States want to assure the international community that the creation of national diversification councils composed of representatives of the private, the scientific and technical and the governmental sectors would enable projects not only to be realistic but also to have a more solid technical orientation under Government coordination. Along with the African Development Bank, these national diversification councils would be focal points, which would facilitate exchanges and a certain amount of technical training for the council members through their relationship with the Bank. This could meet the concern of some institutions that fear poor management or poor utilization of the fund's resources.

Let me call the attention of the international community to another element of the African initiative: it has been careful to provide that project selection criteria should be determined by the African Development Bank to ensure that the management of this facility would not upset the Bank's normal management or give rise to special expenses, and also that criteria set by an institution able to finance a project should make it possible for that project to come closer to the necessary framework. That is why African States did not want to set the criteria through a General Assembly resolution, which might have slowed access to financing for projects.

Finally, the inter-agency task force mandated to follow up the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s would also be involved in this process as adviser to the African Development Bank in carrying out these projects; this will enable the General Assembly to follow the implementation and development of the diversification fund for commodities.

Now the international community must show that it is ready to support Africa in its development efforts, as called for in the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s:

"The international community accepts the principle of shared responsibility and full partnership with Africa and therefore commits itself to giving full and tangible support to the African efforts".
(*resolution 46/151, annex II, para. 1*)

Mr. Maruyama (Japan): Japan attaches great importance to the issue of African development, as indicated by our having hosted the Tokyo International Conference on African Development in October of last year. It is our intention to continue to support the self-help efforts of the African countries, particularly through assistance in areas of agricultural production, basic human needs, infrastructure and support for structural adjustment policies.

One of the conclusions of the Tokyo Conference was that, while no model of development can simply be transferred from one region to another, South-South cooperation between Asia and Africa would be extremely useful. As a follow-up to the Tokyo Declaration, Japan and Indonesia, together with the United Nations, the United Nations Development Programme and the Global Coalition for Africa, have convened an Asia-Africa forum entitled "Sharing of experience", with the participation of African and Asian countries, from 12 to 17 December. The forum provides an opportunity for direct dialogue between African decision-makers and their counterparts from Asia and will serve as a launching pad for concrete projects and programmes in the future.

My delegation agrees about the importance of primary commodities for the export earnings of many African countries and about the need for diversification to reduce the volatility of those earnings. While many African countries are now engaged in efforts to diversify their economies, their efforts are impeded by a host of problems such as a lack of human and financial resources, low productivity, an underdeveloped private sector, and a lack of incentives for foreign investors. All these problems need to be addressed if we are to be successful in the diversification efforts.

In this connection, we would like to emphasize the importance of human-resource development and the role of the private sector as key factors in diversifying the

African economies. The Declaration adopted at the Tokyo Conference recognized that

"the private sector is vital as an engine for sustainable development" and that "though foreign aid has an impact on development, its role is only supplementary in magnitude and catalytic in nature".

My delegation considers that the draft resolution on the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s requires further consultation. While taking note of the need to assist the preparatory phase of African diversification projects, we believe that such assistance should be provided through the existing financial resources and mechanisms. Japan considers that the present draft resolution should suggest only in a general manner that the African Development Fund and the Common Fund for Commodities should provide their assistance in the financing of the preparatory phase of commodity-diversification projects in the African countries. My delegation hopes that, with a flexible and realistic attitude on the part of the parties concerned, consensus can be reached on this draft resolution.

Mr. Mongbe (Benin) (*interpretation from French*): The "Implementation of the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s" is and should be for us Africans one of the main agenda items of this forty-ninth session of the General Assembly, over which you, Mr. President, a worthy son of Africa, have presided with so much skill and talent since the beginning of our work on 20 September last.

Before communicating to the Assembly some of my delegation's thoughts on this item, I should like to indicate that my delegation endorses the statements made here by the Permanent Representative of Tunisia on behalf of the current Chairman of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), and also by my brother the Permanent Representative of Algeria on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

Last year, during the forty-eighth session of the General Assembly, African delegations, as they had done the previous year, expressed their disquiet and concern at the lethargy that had been witnessed since the New Agenda was launched by the adoption of resolution 46/151 of 18 December 1991.

A few days after the suspension of the forty-seventh session, the Secretary-General presided over the first high-level meeting on African development, which he had

convened and which was held at Geneva on 28 December 1992. That first meeting was followed by a second one, held at Rome on 17 and 18 April 1993. These meetings dealt with the following issues: Africa's external debt; diversification of African economies; regional and subregional economic integration in Africa; and improvement of the coordination of non-governmental organization activities for the development of Africa at the level of Governments and of the United Nations system.

My delegation was pleased at the time, and is still pleased, that the Secretary-General had heeded the appeal made by African delegations during the General Assembly's general debate at its forty-seventh session by convening and personally presiding over the two meetings of the panel of high-level personalities on African development.

The delegation of Benin, together with other African delegations and the Chairman of the Group of 77, speaking on behalf of all the States members of the Group, emphasized at the forty-eighth session the relevance of the conclusions of the study contained in the report of the Secretary-General recommending, *inter alia*, the creation of a diversification fund for Africa's commodities within the African Development Bank.

According to that study, the fund would be established for an initial period of three to four years, with a starting level of resources of \$50 million to \$75 million to provide assistance to African countries for the preparation of commodity-diversification programmes and projects. This idea was the subject of lengthy and hard negotiations in a General Assembly working group among a number of delegations from developed countries and representatives of the Group of African States. To give the group a chance to reach a tangible result, the General Assembly, before suspending the forty-eighth session for the year-end holidays, adopted on 23 December 1993 resolution 48/214, whereby it decided to resort to informal consultations, whose recommendations would be examined at a resumed session with a view to the adoption of a final decision. Despite the praiseworthy efforts of the President of the forty-eighth session of the Assembly, Mr. Insanally of Guyana, these consultations were never held because of the absence of a coordinator, following the departure from New York of Mr. Huslid, Ambassador of Norway. We would like now to pay a well-deserved and sincere tribute to Ambassador Huslid for the patience and diplomatic skill he evinced in the face of all the

difficulties he encountered as chairman of the working group responsible for the negotiations.

In implementation of resolution 48/214, and taking into account the evolution of the situation, the Secretary-General issued a new report in April 1994 (A/48/914) calling for the establishment of a fund that would be devoted solely to giving guidance on new ideas for projects concerning the diversification of African commodities and to financing them for a period of three or four years. It was clearly indicated that the financing operations would be centred on the initial phases of the creation of the projects, on market research, on the preparation of feasibility studies and analyses of the project size most likely to attract financing.

In contrast with the original idea of a formal fund with all that would be required in the way of heavy and costly administration, the new report advocated the establishment of a mechanism which would have a modest secretariat within the African Development Bank at Abidjan and would serve as a centre for information and an intermediary for the exchange of data, research and experience. The proposals in the April report give priority to a fund that would facilitate the start-up of projects or funding for the later stages of projects. The secretariat was to work with diversification councils envisaged for each African country. After making a series of concessions, the African delegations finally came to accept a new solution which was, in fact, very far from their initial position and which can be summarized as follows.

"Invites the States participating in the replenishment of the African Development Fund of the African Development Bank to make a special initial contribution of \$50 to \$75 million for a three-year period to finance the preparatory phase of diversification projects and programmes for African commodities.

"Invites the Governing Body of the Common Fund for Commodities, whose headquarters is in Amsterdam, to take into account when considering the future activities of the Fund the special case of African commodities in its policy of support for commodity development, in particular the preparation of feasibility studies aimed at diversifying their export sector and to review its access procedures and policies for African countries to enable them to request financial support, either directly or through regional or subregional organs."

You will agree with me, Mr. President, that these are quite modest proposals for so vast a continent with such vast problems to be solved. It is difficult to understand that those who are convinced of the need for Africa to broaden the basis of its commodities exports and of the urgency of African countries' diversifying their economies so as to strengthen them are yet unable to reach agreement on the surest way to achieve this; that is, to establish a mechanism — very small in administrative terms — to direct operations linked to the diversification of African commodities.

As I had occasion to point out from this rostrum last month during the debate on the Agenda for Development, the only impression that can be gained is that African problems are to continue to be sent for discussion from study groups to working groups, from seminars to conferences, from programme of action to agenda, without ever moving on to the stage of effective implementation of adopted measures and recommendations.

Africa, as generous as its heart-shaped contours on the map would indicate, has always been prepared to join others in consensus on resolutions or decisions concerning other parts of the world, while questions dear to it are rejected almost at session's end and then finally deferred because of a lack of consensus. In view of this situation, my delegation questions the seriousness that our Assembly attaches to its own decision making Africa one of the five priorities of the United Nations.

General Assembly resolution 48/214 and draft resolution A/49/L.44 encourage the establishment of national structures that would operate jointly with the mechanism to be set up within the African Development Bank.

Benin wishes to reiterate its support for the decision regarding the establishment, in each African country, of a national diversification council that could, among other functions, prepare and evaluate diversification projects, taking into account not only the structural and institutional situation but also the available infrastructures and human resources.

Nevertheless, we must emphasize that the effectiveness and success of diversification mechanisms for African commodities will depend on progress achieved in solving existing problems in certain crucial areas, such as Africa's external debt; the need for increased official development assistance; the contribution

of new and additional resources; growth in direct foreign investments; the promotion of small and medium-sized industries and companies; and the transfer and adaptation of technologies for processing commodities, backed by the establishment or strengthening of existing research and development structures that will guarantee, in the long term, the diversification of African economies.

The success of commodity diversification will depend also on measures to be envisaged on the political, geographical and structural levels to modify current African trading systems, which constitute a barrier to South-South trade cooperation in general and to intra-African cooperation in particular.

Moreover, the results of the recent Marrakesh agreements are still far from having corrected the obvious shortcomings in Africa's trade relations with the rest of the world, and in particular with the developed world. On the contrary, all the studies carried out so far show that these agreements have no special provisions for Africa and the least developed countries and would thus aggravate the situation.

The special study on financial resource flows to Africa clearly shows the insufficiency of direct foreign investment in Africa, and in particular south of the Sahara; poorly mobilized national resources, both public and private; the low level of savings; and the drop in official development assistance.

The political and economic reforms undertaken by African States are not enough to arrive at a lasting solution. The international community, by adopting resolution 46/151 of 18 December 1991, committed itself to supporting African efforts to accelerate growth and achieve a human-centred, lasting and sustainable development. This support should translate into tangible and visible actions, measures and projects, as in the case of other devastated areas of the planet.

Regrettably, the financial resources slated for 1992 that Africa needs in order for its gross national product to reach a growth level of 6 per cent have still not arrived. The net amount of official development assistance required was \$30 billion in 1992, with an average growth rate of 4 per cent per year, in accordance with paragraph 29 of the New Agenda. This situation is a strange reminder of the fate suffered by the United Nations Programme of Action for African Economic Recovery and Development, whose humiliating failure because of a lack of financial resources

led us to negotiate the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s.

Within the United Nations, very few large-scale measures have been adopted since the preparation and adoption in 1991 of the New Agenda.

Indeed, the Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for Africa and Least Developed Countries still suffers from a lack of financial and human resources to accomplish its mission of follow-up and effective implementation of the New Agenda. In this respect, I must point out that, despite the personal efforts of the staff of that body, we are still in a holding pattern because of the lack of financial resources, as I have just mentioned.

Because of the alarming situation of the United Nations in the implementation of the New Agenda, my delegation would urge the Secretary-General to invite all the organs, agencies and bodies of the United Nations system to integrate, as early as possible, the priorities of the New Agenda into their respective mandates and to allocate the needed resources so as to make these priorities operational in accordance with the concept of additionality, on which this Agenda is based, and with the five priorities and allocations for the 1990s. The integration of priorities and the allocation of adequate resources by the United Nations system will make it possible to achieve some goals, which can be pursued and improved both through the recommendations to be adopted after the high-level debate in the Economic and Social Council — which in 1995 will be devoted to the implementation of the New Agenda — and by means of decisions and resolutions in 1996, when the General Assembly will carry out its mid-term review.

Moreover, within the context of the implementation and the follow-up to be carried out by the United Nations system and by Africa, the Office of the Special Coordinator for Africa and the Least Developed Countries should, in 1995, in each of the five subregions of Africa, organize seminar-workshops on the priorities defined in the New Agenda. The need to implement these priorities for the economic recovery and development of Africa will thus proceed from the stage of pious hopes to that of reality. These seminar-workshops should be organized in close cooperation with the Organization of African Unity and the African subregional economic communities: the Economic Community of West African States, the Economic Community of Central African States, the Southern African Development Community,

the PTA — Preferential Trade Area for Eastern and Southern African States — and the Maghreb Arab Union.

We hardly wish to delude ourselves. The New Agenda will not succeed unless adequate resources are mobilized and unless the international community complies with its commitments and the United Nations system plays its role correctly. For its part, Africa should continue its reforms and ensure the effective functioning of the follow-up mechanism for monitoring and evaluation of the New Agenda.

The end of the cold war and the prospects of building a more effective and efficient United Nations in the sphere of economic and social development gives us hope that the New Agenda will engender conditions favourable for development and peace in Africa.

Africa has the right and the duty to enter into the twenty-first century on an equal footing and not through a side door, as it would appear from the present situation, which we all deplore and which, together, we must all resolutely correct.

Mr. Mwakawago (United Republic of Tanzania): I should like, at the outset, to express my delegation's support for the statement made by Ambassador Slaheddine Abdellah of Tunisia, who spoke on behalf of the African countries, and for the intervention of Ambassador Ramtane Lamamra of Algeria, who spoke on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. Tanzania also expresses sincere appreciation to Japan for its support for African development.

I wish also to pay special tribute to you, Mr. President, for the exceptional interest that you have taken in this agenda item on the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s.

For more than 30 years aid and assistance have been poured into Africa, with seemingly little effect. Many recipients have become trapped in a damaging cycle of dependence. This state of affairs can no longer be tolerated or sustained. More effective development tools must be found urgently. More visible results must be achieved rapidly, and, as a first step, the scope and mechanisms that have yielded results elsewhere in the past must be expanded.

At the thirteenth special session of the General Assembly, which ended in June 1986, the United Nations Programme of Action for African Economic Recovery and Development was adopted unanimously, and since then the

General Assembly has expressed continuing concern about the pace of progress.

By the end of the 1980s it was evident that the African economic crisis had deepened and that much more vigorous efforts on the part of the international community were necessary. With the establishment of Africa as one of the five priorities of the United Nations in the 1990s, thought was given to the intergovernmental mechanisms that would have to be created to give new direction to the international support that African countries needed so badly. It was on the basis of these premises that the United Nations, at its forty-sixth session, unanimously adopted the New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s. The New Agenda was expected to act as a catalyst, giving political impulse and strength to the other activities within and outside Africa.

The diversification of African economies provides a major way out of dependence on the exporting of commodities and its related problems and contributes to the development of more dynamic and resilient economies. While such diversification is primarily the responsibility of the African countries themselves, the international community recognizes that additional resources will be required to support the continent's diversification programmes, including the establishment of a specific fund to address the problem of their pre-investment stage.

With regard to Africa's commodity exports, the international environment remains hostile. Falling prices have depressed the export earnings of African countries, notwithstanding increased volumes. Huge cuts in imports have thus become necessary. In domestic terms, African production has encountered insurmountable obstacles, including poor weather, wars and civil unrest, as well as macroeconomic imbalances. In 1993 these circumstances combined to reduce the rate of growth to a meagre 1.5 per cent. Imports of agricultural, fishery and forestry products expanded by 26 per cent, to \$10,000 billion, as a result of the effects of drought on crop production in the region. Africa, having been a region with a reasonable balance of trade in agricultural, fishery and forestry products, is now in a position of substantial deficit.

For example, in my country — Tanzania — agriculture dominates the economy, providing a livelihood for 80 per cent of the economically active population, and it accounts for 50 per cent of gross

domestic product and 75 per cent of foreign exchange earnings. The principal export crops are still coffee, cloves, cotton, tea, cashew nuts, sisal and tobacco. Subsistence farming accounts for about 50 per cent of total agricultural output. It is estimated that 8 per cent of the land is currently under cultivation and that, of this, about 3 per cent is irrigated.

In the industrial sector, Tanzania relies on the processing of local commodities and on the manufacture of goods for import substitution. The principal industries are still food processing, textiles, brewing, cigarettes and tourism. The industrial sector grew at a modest annual rate of 4.2 per cent between 1965 and 1980, but it declined by 2.4 per cent during the period 1980-1990, owing mainly to rising energy costs and insufficient foreign exchange to purchase raw materials, machinery and spare parts. An economy such as that of Tanzania's is both fragile and inflexible and, therefore, demands both vertical and horizontal diversification to make it viable and sustainable.

The implementation of structural adjustment programmes, however favourable their medium-term and long-term impact is likely to be, has not taken place without social stress, social disruption and political risks. The reduction in the levels of per capita consumption and of imports have had social costs — in particular, for health care, education, nutrition, employment and the maintenance of social institutions. Despite the agreement, under the Programme of Action, to deal urgently with commodity issues, taking into account the special interests of African countries, no additional efforts were made to undertake measures aimed at stabilizing, at reasonably remunerative levels, the earnings from those commodities and minerals that are of primary interest to Africa.

The decrease in overall performance was therefore accounted for in part by the unsatisfactory export situation. Trade gains fell below expectations in many key commodity areas, and Africa suffered a decline in market share.

The conclusion of the Uruguay Round of multilateral trade negotiations has not offered Africa any prospect of better terms of trade. In fact, the final text imposes many obligations with regard to market access and stricter regulations in certain areas, such as agriculture, market protection, textiles and clothing.

Following renegotiation of the tariff reductions granted under the generalized system of preferences and the Lomé Convention, the reductions offered by the major

export markets for African countries led to preferential-margin reductions of 28.2 per cent, 40.2 per cent and 15.7 per cent in the cases of the European Union, Japan and the United States respectively. African countries will certainly suffer an erosion of the preferential margins for most of their major exports. This will result in the loss of comparative advantage and, therefore, in a drop in market share and a consequent decline in export earnings.

For African countries, agricultural products based on natural resources represented a major source of revenue. However, according to the final text of the Uruguay Round, preferential margins will decrease by 60 per cent under the generalized system of preferences and 16 per cent under Lomé IV. It is obvious that the African economies are not flexible enough to enter this new multilateral trade structure unless there is a concerted effort by the international community to extend preferential terms.

The negotiations on the establishment of a diversification fund for Africa's commodities were carried over from the forty-eighth session of the General Assembly. After protracted negotiations last year it was decided that consideration of the item should be extended into the resumed forty-eighth session and, finally, into the forty-ninth session.

It is my delegation's conviction that our partners have had the opportunity to consult with their capitals, with each other and with the relevant institutions, including the Common Fund and the African Development Bank, in exploring ways to establish a mechanism through which funds could be made available for diversification programmes.

Taking into account the urgency of the matter, my delegation would also like to call upon multilateral financial and trade institutions to commit adequate resources to meet the needs of the new fund. On our part, Tanzania hopes to establish national diversification councils, in conformity with resolution 48/214, which will create the necessary momentum in the efforts to diversify our economies.

The States participants in the African Development Fund, which is under the auspices of the African Development Bank, are invited to make an initial special contribution, in the amount of \$50 million to \$75 million over a period of three years, to finance the preparatory phase of the commodity-diversification programme in Africa.

May I conclude by urging our development partners to extend the necessary support to the draft resolution on the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s and the issue of the commodity diversification fund so that it will be adopted by the Assembly, thus making it possible for the diversification programmes to begin without further delay.

Mr. Gambari (Nigeria): My delegation fully supports the statements made by the representative of Algeria, on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, and by my colleague the representative of the current Chairman of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) in the debate on the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s. In expressing that support, we would also like to make some remarks from a national standpoint.

The United Nations Programme of Action for African Economic Recovery and Development 1986-1990 prepared the ground for a fruitful dialogue between Africa and the international community on possible approaches to coming to grips with the region's socio-economic and developmental problems. Unfortunately, the international community failed to live up to its promise, which is why the New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s was subsequently negotiated and adopted.

The programme of the New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s has yet to fructify. Under General Assembly resolution 48/214, which launched the New Agenda for the Development of Africa, the detailed follow-up action and monitoring machinery set forth in it was designed to ensure that Africa would be at the centre of the international community's focus and attention through the 1990s. This, unfortunately, has not yet come to fruition either.

Africa's economy is essentially agrarian and very dependent on the production of agricultural commodities for the survival of the continent's teeming populations and for earning scarce foreign currency. Therefore, African countries should continue to exert their best efforts to diversify their economies. However, agricultural commodities tend to attract low prices in the world market, which becomes a disincentive to the sustaining of such efforts. The continent therefore needs international support for its development; hence, the call for establishing and placing in operation a diversification fund for Africa's commodities, which would make it possible to put in place the measures required to support Africa's own efforts in this direction.

Following the 1980s, which for us in Africa has been described as the "lost decade", our continent continues to be confronted with critical socio-economic problems which deserve the very urgent attention and support of the international community. A recent survey of economic and social conditions in the continent indicates that after the loss of the development momentum achieved in the 1980s, and in spite of the rigorous application of structural adjustment programmes by most African countries, socio-economic hardships in Africa have become more severe, and we have yet to achieve self-sustaining economic growth and development.

Africa's low commodity prices and crushing external-debt burden are the principal factors responsible for the continent's poor economic performance. The growth rate of Africa's economic output has, unfortunately, continued to decline: from a high of 3.1 per cent in 1990, to 2.3 per cent in 1991, to 1.5 per cent in 1992 and to a mere 1.4 per cent in 1993. As we approach the end of 1994, the situation is still not encouraging. In the context of this dismal picture, vast amounts of resources must now be mobilized, particularly from external sources, in order to enhance the programme of economic recovery, growth and development before the close of the 1990s.

As we urge the international community to support the economic challenges facing Africa, it is important to emphasize that we are referring to a significant and a sizeable portion of the globe, inhabited by nearly 600 million people spread through its 52 countries, a continent which is also endowed with a considerable share of the world's natural and mineral resources but which earns only 1 per cent of its wealth. At a time when most African nations have adopted painful but necessary economic reform and adjustment programmes and when African countries are intensifying their efforts in the promotion of subregional and continent-wide economic cooperation and economic integration, Africa is a continent ravaged by poverty and marginalized in the area of world trade.

We acknowledge that the conclusion of the Uruguay Round and the signature of the Uruguay Trade Agreement at Marrakesh, Morocco, in April of this year is an important landmark in international cooperation in the promotion of free trade among the countries and regions of the world. However, there is fear that the new world trade agreement that we have to realize, and which was signed in our continent, will not in fact, in the

foreseeable future, benefit the African continent. This is an additional reason why we believe that the international community, through the Programme of Action of the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s, should as a matter of priority take into account the need to implement, in both the short and long term, a strategic plan for the diversification of Africa's commodity and other exports.

Nigeria, like other developing countries, believes that it is the primary responsibility of national Governments to develop strategies to improve socio-economic growth and thereby enhance the living conditions of their people. Nigeria and other African countries regard the Programme of Action of the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s as a compact between them, on the one hand, and the international community, on the other, to help to build their respective national capabilities and capacities. In this connection, we will welcome the establishment of the national diversification councils in conjunction with the provision of a diversification fund.

Finally, as the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s illustrates, Africa needs the immediate and urgent commitment of the international community in the form of increased financial resources. This cannot be overemphasized. We also believe that the involvement of the United Nations system, along with the collaboration and cooperation of multilateral financial institutions, is indispensable in assisting us to meet the urgent challenges of African development.

Agenda item 8

Adoption of the agenda and organization of work:

Letter from the Chairman of the Committee on Conferences (A/49/351/Add.1)

The President (*interpretation from French*): I should like to draw the Assembly's attention to document A/49/351/Add.1, which contains a letter dated 8 December 1994 addressed to the President of the General Assembly by the Chairman of the Committee on Conferences. As members are aware, the Assembly, in paragraph 7 of resolution 40/243, decided that no subsidiary organ of the General Assembly should be permitted to meet at United Nations Headquarters during a regular session of the General Assembly unless explicitly authorized by the Assembly.

As indicated in the letter I have just mentioned, the Committee on Conferences has recommended that the General Assembly authorize the Trust Committee of the United Nations Fund for Namibia to meet in New York during the forty-ninth session of the General Assembly.

May I take it that the General Assembly adopts the recommendation of the Committee on Conferences?

It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 12.55 p.m.